themselves so far removed from the animal world as is the case amongst more civilised races. 825

Another point on which Thongas see a resemblance between man and the animal is this : they believe that both possess the *nuru* (I. p. 478 ; II, p. 77-80). It is true that the nuru is only found in some animals : the eland, the ndakazi antelope, the elephant, the hippopotamus, etc. We shall have to consider this superstition again when dealing with Thonga Animism. 774

Is this idea of identity between man and the animal pushed so far as a belief that men can transform themselves into animals, and vice-versa? It is certain that in tales men are often changed into hyenas, lions, etc. (See Dukuli, *Les Ba-Ronga*, p. 283 and the story of the Ogre Ziniko (p. 256).) But these are purely fictitious. The theory is by no means generally accepted. In the ordinary course of life such transformations would not be considered possible. But they are certainly thoroughly believed in in the domain of magic. Magicians claim that they can fly through the air, with their axes, transform themselves into the lightning bird and so kill their enemy. But it is the wizards (baloyi) who are considered to possess this power par excellence, especially the faculty of changing human beings into beasts to make them work on their behalf. These ideas will be studied in Chapter III. 825 791

I have already mentioned the bird which "stops travellers" (I. p. 339) ; amongst Mammalia a certain Antelope is the object of the same superstitious fear. This is the little red *magulwe* (or *shipene*) whose astragalus bone is employed in divination under the name of malumbi (See Part VI. Letter D). — "When it crosses the road, in front of a travelling party," says Mankhelu, "the leader of the company stops his comrades, goes forward, sits down alone at the spot where the antelope passed, and pours his magical powder into the footprints of the animal. Then he shouts to his companions to come and follow him. Having walked for some time, he takes off all his clothing, and lies down quite naked, as if he were dead. The others continue their march forward. After a while, he jumps to his feet and, making a circuit through the bush, outruns them, without being noticed, and sits down on the road, further on. 825 777

774 763 But although Natives locate the psychic faculties in the different organs, they certainly believe in an independent psychic principle, in a *soul*. On this point, however, their ideas are most confused. They call it *moya*, spirit, and in the Ronga clans, *hika*, breath (the plural mahika, in the expression "ku ba ni mahika," means to be out of breath). This is the vital principle of man, and when a person is dying, his relatives sit near him "waiting for the departure of breath" (langusela ku suka ka hika). "The spirit has gone," — "moya wu sukile," they say, when death has come. They have no theory as regards the way the breath goes out of the body, nor do they stop the nostrils or the mouth to prevent its escape (1).

774 A third name for soul is *ntjhuti* (mu-mi), or *shitjhuti* (Ro.), *ndjuti* (Dj.) *shadow*. It seems to apply more especially to the departed soul rather than to the psychic principle of the living. I have been assured that one cannot dream of the shintjuti of any one still alive, but only if he is dead. The shadow, as such, is not subject to many taboos or superstitious fears. They do not fear to tread on the shadow of a chief, for instance. It may even be questioned if they identify the material shadow with the shitjhuti, the spiritual part of man which separates from his body at death (2). At any rate many think that it is the shitjhuti which becomes shikwembu, the ancestor god.

In former times Thongas feared to look at their own reflection in a pool. They seem to have passed that stage now. The reason was perhaps that they thought their spiritual principle to be

775 826 (1) A Native of Botshabelo, near Middleburg, Transvaal, asserted in my hearing that in this part of the Sutho nation it was believed that the human soul escaped from the body at death in the form of a Copris beetle. The grave is not filled up with earth until a Copris has been seen in the neighbourhood; and if a hawk appears at the same time the satisfaction is still greater; the beetle has transformed itself into a hawk and the soul has in truth found its way out. Strange to say, when these Ba-Sutho give a patient medicine and see that it has had the desired effect, they say: "It has agreed with the Copris;" whilst if the patient dies they say: "The Copris has refused the medicine."

774 (2) In the following story a direct relation is established between the real shadow and the vital principle. A Ronga magician, Shidzabelane, used to show his supernatural power in the following way: he slept on the ground and ordered a mortar to be placed on his chest and three women to pound mealies in it. This seemed to make no impression on him (a fact which can easily be explained if he was in a state of catalepsy). But it suddenly occurred to one of these women that he had perhaps passed into his shadow, so she hit the shadow with her pestle. The magician at once rose, crying out; he had really left his body and entered into his shadow!

identical with their image. This notion seems to be at the root of 774
the fear they show of being photographed, as we shall see directly.

We see therefore that Thongas are not at all dogmatic on this subject. The soul is at the same time the breath, viz., something of the nature of the wind, the shadow, the image, the external likeness, or fashion of man as opposed to his flesh.

Whatever may be the original notion, they consider the human being as double and capable of unsheathing itself on certain occasions ; their conception on this point may throw more light on their ideas concerning the nature of the soul.

Some believe that the *unsheathing* always takes place during the night and that the soul comes back when its owner awakes ; this is, par excellence, the case in regard to witches, who unsheath by their magical power and bewitch people during the night, as we shall see. But, though the belief is not universal, some think that all souls go away (or die) during sleep. I heard a boy earnestly praying one evening that his soul might come back to him next morning! This is a kind of physiological normal unsheathing which is attended with no bad results. But a pathological unsheathing also exists, and is very dangerous. It may be caused by the photograph of a man being taken. Ignorant Natives [609]
instinctively object to being photographed. They say : "These White people want to steal us (pepula) and take us with them, far away into lands which we do not know, and we shall remain only incomplete beings." When shown the magic lantern, you hear them pitying the men shown on the pictures, and saying : "That is how they ill-treat us when they take our photographs! (1)"

But the great and dangerous parting of soul and body, which 774
causes certain death, is that which wizards operate by their magic 754
charms. We shall study these strange conceptions in Chapter 761
III. They firmly believe that such is the result of witchcraft ; so, when some one is dying, and the divinatory bones have revealed that the disease was caused by a certain *noyi* (witch or wizard), the

(1) The following reflection well illustrates the superstitious fear which Natives have of likenesses of the dead. Before the 1894 war broke out, I had gone to show the magic lantern in remote heathen villages, and people accused me of having caused the disturbance by bringing to life again (pfusha) men who had died long ago.

754 magician shuts him in with the dying man in the hut and gives him
774 the following command : "Bring back the spirit which you have
761 taken and hidden somewhere." Some magicians, who are more powerful than the wizards, pretend to be able to find the stolen spirit and so to restore the patient to health. In cases of epilepsy, or of any psychic trouble attended with unconsciousness, when the sick person returns to his senses, they triumph : have they not brought back the soul? But they say that this must be done in haste. No time must be lost!

775 Lastly, the final unsheathing of personality takes place at death. The body becomes rotten, but the shadow goes away and continues its life as a god, shikwembu. The belief in the continuation of life after death is universal, being at the base of Ancestrolatry, which is the religion of the tribe. We shall study the ideas relating to the future life when dealing with the gods.

What Thongas can absolutely not understand is the resurrection of the body. "Mbuti yi fa, yi bola ; homu yi fa, yi bola ; munhu a fa, a bola!" — "The goat dies and rots, the ox dies and rots, man dies and rots!" answers the sceptical Thonga when he hears the story of the resurrection.

On the whole their ideas of future life are not so very different from those of the ancient Greeks, who believed that the human soul went after death to the realm of shadows.

787 *Dreams* are not generally liked by the Thongas. If something
828 they happened to dream really takes place, it "disgusts" them (nyenyetsa). When a man has seen a woman several times in his dreams, especially if she was pregnant, he will consult the bones. If he dreams that he has relations with her, he may go next day and hit her with a stick. He leaves the stick on the ground and goes away without a word. According to Mboza, this is done to get rid of the obsession, and to prevent the dream from becoming reality. That is the reason, I suppose, why a Christian boy once said to his missionary : "I dream of many people, but I keep quiet!" Amongst Thongas dreams do not seem to play the great part which the animistic theory attributes to them in the formation of primitive beliefs.

2: Junod M-5 (1895-1909) 1927 Thonga

Conclusion of Chapter I. Classification of Thonga Conceptions of Nature and Man.

774 .1

During the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, the question of the various religions was discussed one day in connection with the preaching of the missionary message. Speakers frequently mentioned Animism in their discourses. In the gallery which was reserved for missionaries' wives, a lady wrote a few words on a slip of paper and passed it to a gentleman who happened to be sitting not far from her : — "Can you tell me what animistic religions are?" was the question it contained. Unfortunately the answer given by the gentleman is unknown. He probably felt somewhat embarrassed... The lady was quite right in putting the question, as few people really understand what is meant by this term! It is not so easy to give at a moment's notice, a thorough and adequate definition of its meaning on a slip of paper.

The South African tribes are regarded as animistic in their beliefs. They belong to that section of mankind which is said to profess the animistic religion. But in what does their Animism consist? Since Tylor first invented the word Animism and defined it as "the belief in spiritual beings," it has acquired a wonderful popularity, but it has been used so indiscriminately that it has lost very much of its definiteness and it has been necessary for modern Anthropology to restrict its meaning in order to maintain scientific precision.

Animism according to Prof. Marett (*The Threshold of Religion*, p. 15.) implies not merely the attribution of personality and will, but of "soul or spirit." He terms *Animatism* conceptions according to which natural objects are endowed with personality and will only, but not with a distinct existence as spirits. In as far as the power attributed to natural objects is not clearly personified, but conceived of as a more or less independent energy, or virtue, we are dealing with *Dynamism* and not Animism. To these distinctions I would add another, which is essential. When speaking with savages or semi-primitive men, you sometimes hear them expressing ideas, giving explanations which are purely *personal*, whilst others of their notions are *collective*. When we wish to ascertain the conceptions of a tribe as a whole, we must lay much more stress on this latter kind ; they are generally incorporated in rites and customs which every one accepts ; they are really *beliefs*, whilst those of the first category are merely *ideas* springing from the imagination of the savage.

774 771 Having traced the broad lines of our classification let us now see how far the Thonga conceptions are animistic, animatic or dynamistic.

1) Individual ideas.

In a certain year, the *mintjhopfa* trees (p. 19) did not bear fruit. A Rikatla boy, named Zinyao, took a stick and walked through the bush, belabouring all the ntjhopfa shrubs, scolding them because they had not done their duty. An ethnographer, anxious to penetrate into the mysteries of primitive souls, might infer from this fact that Thongas believe in the personality of trees, and that each tree possesses a spirit ; this would however be absolutely false. Zinyao was doing the same thing as a little boy who hits the table against which he has knocked his head, or as a little girl who breaks her doll because she is angry with it. The same boy, who was evidently endowed with a strongly animistic tendency, once saw a big moth fall to the ground ; a hen at once ran towards it and devoured it. Zinyao watched very attentively, and I heard him muttering to himself : "The Son-of-Moth goes to the Son-of-Hen, yonder, and asks him to pay a fine, because, says he, I have been eaten by you there on the earth." If this reflection were taken seriously, it would mean that, to the Thonga mind, each animal has a soul which continues to exist after death, and even that wrongs done to an animal during its earthly life must be repaired in the after world. This conclusion would be absolutely erroneous. No one seriously believes in a continued existence of animals after death ; and, as to a final judgment, there is no idea of it, even as regards human beings, who are believed to be immortal! These were the *personal views* of Zinyao.

I would place in the same category the description of the fight between the moon and the sun, as given by Spoon (p. 307). The same informant on another occasion gave me an eloquent and graphic account of the battle of the water near the lake of Rikatla, when the rain has been falling for many days : "In the hollow there is a papyrus marsh which becomes filled with water ; at a quarter of an hour's distance the lake itself is swollen by the rain ; there is a canal which joins marsh and lake ; so the waters flow into that canal from both sides ; they meet in the middle and fight : but the water from the papyrus marsh comes with greater force, and after a while it overcomes the other current and makes its way triumphantly to the lake!" These individual ideas are either animatic (idea of trees, of sun and moon, of water,

lightning), or animistic (Son-of-the-Moth). But they are not of much importance. They belong to the same category as the description given by the Psalmist of the sun as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, or to that of Homer comparing the break of the day to a young damsel with rosy fingers. This is poetry, mere personification of natural objects, or forces, and not beliefs. The poetical tendency is very marked amongst primitive races. It may be that ideas of this kind were more firmly held in former times, if the tribe has really passed through a more mythological phase, a hypothesis for which there are some grounds.

2) Collective beliefs.

The beliefs of the Thongas which deserve to be called by that name because they are universal and express themselves in important rites and customs, are the following :

1. The human soul continues its existence after death, when it is endowed with new powers which make it an object of awe and fear. *The spirits of the ancestors* are the main objects of religious worship. They form the principal category of spirits (psikwembu).

2. Although the spirits of the departed generally have nothing to do with people other than their descendants, some of them, especially *those belonging to foreign tribes*, can take possession of living men and cause troubles which must be cured by a process of exorcism. This is the second category of spirits.

3. Some individuals have the power of magically unsheathing themselves during the night, and their spirit goes out to torment, or to kill and eat other people. These are *the wizards* (baloyi) ; this third category of spirits accomplish their wicked deeds when separated from the body, but their body is still living and they re-enter it. These three beliefs are distinctly animistic.

4. There is in man, and in a few large animals, a semi-spiritual principle, the *nuru*, which escapes from the body when the individual is killed in war, or in hunting, and through which the dead man, or animal, avenges himself or itself on the murderer. What is the relation between the nuru and the shadow (sitjhuti)? This is not stated. The nuru seems to be of a more material nature, as it can enter a root, and it remains attached to the corpse and the bones of the person or animal killed. This category of spiritual enemies, probably invented under the influence of fear and remorse, has no connection with ordinary people,

771 and only troubles those who have killed, rendering them, as is generally
774 believed, insane. — The nuru belief seems to be a compromise between
828 Animism and Dynamism. (See p. 77-80.)

789 5. There are in plants, animals, stones, hidden virtues which can be either useful or harmful to man. Medicine-men (tinanga) possess a more or less esoteric knowledge of such, and magicians (bangoma), endowed with special powers, can acquire a control over these virtues and use them in medical art, or in magic. — This is true Dynamism.

6. Certain natural objects, such as the sea, the bush fire, are sometimes vaguely personified. — This is Animatism.

772 7. But above them all is Heaven, Tilo, which is sometimes looked on as a real being, sometimes as an impersonal power, a number of mysterious superstitions finding their explanation in this strange and perhaps obsolete notion of Heaven. — This is more than Animatism and seems to be a vague theistic, even monotheistic, idea.

771 774 The essential difference between Animism and Dynamism seems to me clear. But it is by no means absolute. We shall often meet with rites which belong to both domains, or bear an intermediate character. In the following chapters the exact nature and influence of these various kinds of spirits and impersonal forces will be studied, and I hope that an explanation of all the facts concerning them will throw more light on the subject and show that, at any rate, Thonga Animism is very different from the Animism of the Dutch East Indies, for instance, where men speak of thousands of spirits of the earth, air, water, mountains and trees ; very different also from the fetichism met with in other Bantu tribes of Central and Western Africa.

* * *

82 789 Before leaving this chapter, in which I have tried to sketch what I have called by the rather pretentious term of The Natural Philosophy of the Bantus, and as a preparation for the explanation of the religious and dynamistic rites described in the following chapters, I think it advisable to set forth the principles which seem to underlie most of these rites, and which may be called the *axioms of primitive mentality*.

As regards what are commonly called *magic rites* I contend that they are in no sense purely arbitrary but that they rest on certain definite principles. These axioms of primitive mentality are what anthropologists fittingly call collective representations, viz., everybody believes